

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co
Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000
Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira
Attorney General of Colombia

August 21, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of **indigenous communities in Chocó** whose rights continue to be violated by the presence of and clashes between paramilitary groups, the rebel group National Liberation Army (ELN), and state security forces.

On Monday July 17, at around 9am, an armed confrontation was reported between the Colombian Naval Infantry and an illegal armed group a few meters from the Wounaan indigenous community of San José and Taparalito on the San Juan River, in Chocó Department. Out of fear of further violence, this community, made up of 900 Wounaan indigenous people, have found themselves in a situation of forced confinement.

Another danger comes from anti-personnel mines planted by the National Liberation Army (ELN) to stop the advance of paramilitary groups. On July 11, **Sebastián Carpio Necheche**, an 18-year old member of the JUUNDUURR community, a Wounaan Katio de Quiparadó reservation in the municipality of Riosucio, Chocó, was seriously wounded due to the explosion of an anti-personnel mine.

The Wounaan Authorities' Community Council (WOUNDEKO) has also reported the forced recruitment of indigenous children, occurrences of forced displacement and fear among the indigenous communities living in Chocó. The Council has warned of the severity of the situation faced by displaced indigenous communities, primarily in the municipalities of Riosucio and Quibdó in Chocó Department and of Buenaventura in Valle del Cauca Department.

In 2009, the Constitutional Court of Colombia issued Resolution 004, urging the Colombian government to take measures, with an ethnic perspective, to design and develop a public policy on enforced displacement, aiming to protecting life, freedom and cultural diversity. According to Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International, "The situation of extreme risk which indigenous communities in Colombia face is alarming. These crimes highlight one of the main challenges in the implementation of the peace process: the protection of the communities living in the areas which have been most affected by the armed conflict and the need to guarantee that these deplorable acts do not go unpunished."

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- request an immediate humanitarian agreement between the Colombian government and the ELN, as part of the current peace process so as to end the hostilities and achieve a mutual ceasefire
- issue a comprehensive plan for the protection of displaced indigenous communities in compliance with Constitutional Court Resolution 004/2009
- ensure the implementation of the victims' clause in the Peace Agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guaranteeing the end of violence towards these communities in accordance with human rights standards.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

and

Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Camilo Reyes, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
Colombia Desk, US State Department (attention: Ian Arzeni and Gail Morgado) ~ via email
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458. 3650
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: